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Becoming a Psychological First Aider (PFA)

A Special Guide for those who Care

Ashref Ismail

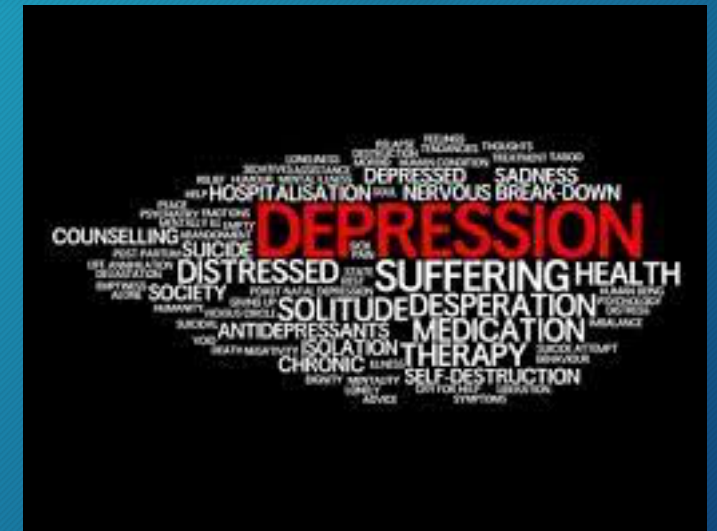
Certified Performance Coach, Mentor, Facilitator, Lecturer, Writer and Presenter

Presentation Overview



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- Understanding PFA
- How to Help Responsibly
- Providing PFA
- Caring for Yourself
- Ending your Help





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Understanding PFA

The Daily Reality of Crises



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- Wars
- Political strife
- Socio-economic challenges
- Natural disasters
- Accidents and incidents
- Diseases, viruses and injuries
- Job losses
- Financial and material losses
- Loss of a loved one
- Interpersonal violence/abuse
- Criminal convictions
- Loss of status and then some...



How crises affect people depends on a number of factors:



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- Nature and severity of the event;
- Experience with previous distressing events;
- The support they have;
- Their physical health;
- Their personal and family history with mental health;
- Their cultural background and traditions;
- Their age and gender.



Some emotional responses...



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- Feelings of suicide
- Alzheimer's diseases, Dementia
- Depression, alcohol abuse
- Insomnia, memory loss
- Poor focus
- Poor anger management
- Constantly fearful, anxious and worrying
- Mentally fatigued and physically exhausted
- Loss of appetite
- Lack of enthusiasm - moping around
- Socially withdrawn



Understanding the Stages of Grief (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Model)



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- Shock and Denial
- Pain and Guilt
- Anger and Bargaining
- Depression and Reflection
- Loneliness and Sadness
- Recovery and Hope



What is Psychological First Aid? (PFA)



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- Providing practical care and support which does not intrude;
- Assessing needs and concerns;
- Helping people to address basic needs;
- Listening to people, not pressurising them to talk;
- Comforting people and helping them to feel calm;
- Helping people to connect to information, services and social supports;
- Protecting people from further harm.



What is NOT PFA?

- It is NOT something that only professionals can do.
- It is NOT professional counselling.
- It is NOT psychological debriefing.
- It is NOT asking someone to analyse what happened to them or to put time and events in order.
- Although PFA involves being available to listen to people's stories, it is not about pressurising people to tell you their feelings and reactions to an event.



Who is PFA for?



- Distressed people who have been recently exposed to a serious crisis event. You can provide help to both children and adults.
- However, not everyone will need or want PFA, so do not force help on people who do not want it, but avail yourself to those who may want support.



People who may need advanced assistance



- People with serious, life-threatening injuries who may need emergency medical care;
- People who are so upset that they cannot care for themselves or their children;
- People who may hurt themselves or others;
- People who have a history of mental illness.



What qualities are required to be an effective PFA?



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- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Compassion
- Patient and understanding
- Good listener
- Community worker
- Volunteer
- Good intentions
- Make a positive contribution
- Sincere
- Maintain confidentiality



When is PFA provided?

- Ideally as soon after as the crises has occurred or...
- ...even weeks there-after.
- the duration of the assistance may differ from person to person and from the crises experienced.



Where is PFA provided?



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- Anywhere where it is safe to do so.
- Community settings, scene of incidents and accidents, health centres, shelters, camps, religious centres, schools, food distribution points.
- Ideally you need a place where there is privacy and confidentiality to talk.





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How to help Responsibly

Principles of Respect, Safety, Dignity and Rights

Respect People's...	
Safety	• Avoid putting people further at risk of harm as a result of your actions; • Protect children and adults from (further) physical and psychological stress; • Know when to summon for professional.
Dignity	• Treat people with respect irrespective of age, religion, gender, caste, class, culture etc; • Be sensitive to their religious, cultural and social norms. • Do not be prejudicial.
Rights	• Make sure that people can access help fairly and without discrimination; • Help people to claim their rights and access available support; • Act only in the best interest of any person you encounter.

Ethical Do's and Don'ts



Do's	Don'ts
Be honest and trustworthy	Exploit your relationship as a helper.
Respect people's right to make their own decision	Ask for money or favours for helping them
Be aware of and set aside your won biases and prejudices	Make false promises or give false or incorrect information.
Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now they can still access help in the future.	Don't exaggerate your skills.
Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, where appropriate.	Don't force help people on people and don't be intrusive or pushy.
Behave appropriately by considering the person's culture, age and gender.	Don't pressurise people to tell you their story and don't share their story with others.
Be grateful and mindful of your attitude.	Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings.

Be aware of cultural sensitivities



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- When there is a crises, people from various backgrounds could be affected.
- This includes minority groups and those marginalized.
- Be aware of the sensitive around communication, dress, gender relations, religious constraints etc before engaging with people.
- Set aside your own prejudices and biases
- Each crises is unique.
- Adapt this guide according to best serving the needs of your affected people.



Consider the following checklist before engaging



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ITEM	SELF QUESTION
Dress	Do I need to be dressed in a certain way to be respectful?
Language	What language do they speak
Greeting	What is the customary way of greeting?
Gender	Should only women PFA's approach affected women?
Age/Power	Who is the head of the clan/family? Should you gain their consensus?
Touching	What are the usual customs around holding hands, touching shoulder or hugging?
Behaviour	How will I adjust my behaviour around elderly and children?
Approach	How will I avoid being paternalistic, patronising or condescending?
Beliefs	What religious beliefs are held by the affected people?
Religion	Do I know the salient religious principles of the affected people?

When responding to a major crises situation...



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- Be aware of the nature and scale of the crises.
- Be aware of which agencies are responding to the crises.
- Be aware of the lead agency at the scene.
- Offer your assistance by registering your details as a volunteer.
- Be aware of all resources that are available.
- Do not get in the way of professional help.
- Know your role and the limits to your role.
- ***Your role is to provide psychological SUPPORT!***



Start by taking care of yourself, first.



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- Depending on the crises, you may be exposed to various trauma.
- Helping responsibly means taking care of your own mental and physical health and well-being first, then your family's.
- If working in a team be aware of the wellbeing of fellow team members.
- You cannot get involved in all cases. Engage with those cases that you can manage.
- Do not feel guilty for what you could not do.
- Keep reasonable hours and get lots of rest. Find someone you can vent to. Find ways to receive support.



Providing Psychological First Aid

Good communication is essential.



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- People who have experienced stress/trauma may be angry, afraid, confused and frustrated.
- Some may blame themselves, others questioning God.
- A major trauma can shake your beliefs.
- Some would want to share their story, others not.
- Some may become withdrawn and reserved, others loud and obsessive.
- Some may just want you to be there, sitting quietly, rather than talking.
- Allow people their space to heal at their time, not yours.
- Be aware of your body language: gestures, facial expressions, language usage, intonation etc.



Things to say and do...



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- Find a quiet place to talk, free of distractions.
- Respect privacy and keep information confidential.
- Sit near the person but be aware of appropriate cultural considerations.
- Employ full listening skills! (This is critical)
- Be patient, calm and reassuring.
- Provide factual information. Admit what you DON'T know.
- Provide information clearly and ambiguously.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling at their loss.
- Acknowledge the person's strength and how they have helped themselves.
- Allow for silence.



Things not to say and do.

- Don't pressurize people to share their story.
- Don't interrupt or rush people's story.
- Don't be loud and dramatic.
- Don't touch people if you don't know if its fine to do so.
- Don't judge what people say.
- Don't make up things you don't know.
- Don't use jargon.
- Don't tell them other people's story.
- Don't talk about your own problems.
- Don't give false promises or false hope.
- Don't act as if you have to solve all the person's problems.
- Don't remove their strength and sense of well-being.
- Don't refer to people in negative terms.



Before engaging with the affected person...



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- Learn about the following:
- The Crises Event
- Available Supports and Services
- Safety and Security Concerns
- Background of the affected person/s



Action Principles of the PFA: Look, Listen and Link



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Principles	Action
Look	• Check for safety • Check for obvious, basic, urgent needs. • Check for people with serious distress reactions.
Listen	• Approach people who may need support. • Ask about people's needs and concerns. • Listen to people, and help to let them feel calm.
Link	• Help people address basic needs and access services. • Help people cope with problems. • Give information • Connect people with loved ones and social support.

Approaching/Engaging with Affected People



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- Approach affected people respectfully and according to their culture;
- Ask if you can provide help;
- Find a safe and quiet place to talk;
- Help the person feel comfortable;
- Keep the person safe from further harm;
- Protect from exposure to the media for their privacy and dignity;
- If the person is highly distressed, do not leave them alone.
- Be extra sensitive when dealing with children



Ask about people's needs and concerns



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- Some needs may be obvious;
- Others not so;
- Ask them what are their immediate concerns and help them to prioritize these.
- Listen with the eyes, ears and heart.
- Help them feel calm by keeping your tone calm and soft.



Common needs in a major crises



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- Basic needs: shelter, food and water and sanitation;
- Health services for injuries or help with chronic medical conditions;
- Possible transport and errands;
- Understandable and correct information about the event, loved ones and available services;
- Being able to contact loved ones, friends and other social supports.
- Access to religious and cultural contact.
- Being consulted and involved in important decisions.



Remember, your ultimate role is to...



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- *Help people to help themselves to regain control of their situation*



Encourage positive coping strategies



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- Get enough rest
- Eat regularly and drink lots of water.
- Talk and spend time with loved ones.
- Discuss your issues with someone trustworthy.
- Do activities that help you relax.
- Do physical exercise.
- Find ways to help others.
- If possible, get back to your normal routine as soon as possible.



Discourage Negative coping strategies



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- Don't take drugs, smoke or drink alcohol;
- Don't sleep all day;
- Don't isolate yourself from family and friends;
- Don't overwork to overcompensate;
- Don't neglect personal hygiene;
- Don't be violent;
- Don't avoid religious connection.



Ending your help



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- When and how you stop your help will depend on the context of the crisis, your role and the people's needs;
- Use your best judgement based on the needs of the affected person and your needs.
- If someone else will be taking over, explain the reason and make the introductions.
- Do not leave any loose ends – “hand over” the person carefully.
- Provide links to networks.
- Wish them well and leave positively.
- Keep in touch!

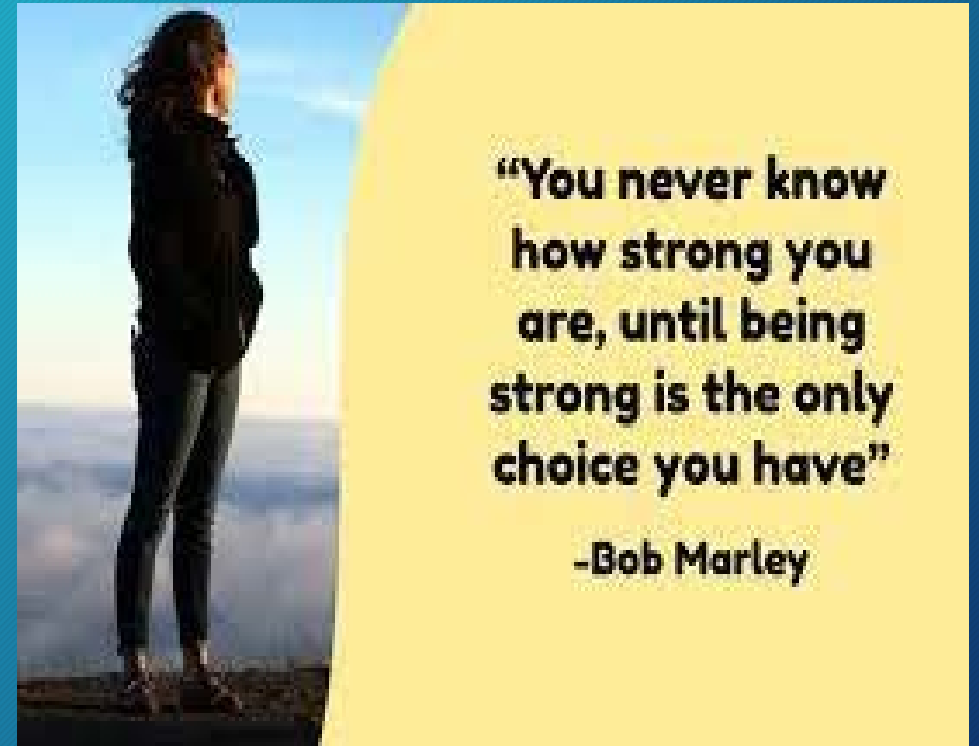


Finally, please remember...



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- Being a PFA is a calling.
- It's not for everyone.
- You have your limitations.
- Your ultimate role is to help the person until they are strong enough to regain control of their well-being.
- Try not to get emotionally attached...yes, its hard, I know!
- Rest, reflect and learn from the experiences.
- The more you give (care) the more you will be blessed in ways you never expected!



Acknowledgement



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- Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers
- World Health Organization
- Download this presentation at
- www.realworldtraining.co.za



**World Health
Organization**

Contact details



- **Ashref Ismail**
- www.RealWorldTraining.co.za
- ash@rwtraining.co.za
- 061 447 8506

